



Department of Justice

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BARNHART, MISSOURI MAN INDICTED ON FEDERAL CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGES - IF CONVICTED FACES A PENALTY OF 5 TO 20 YEARS IN PRISON

ST. LOUIS, MO - Thomas Mantle, Barnhart, Missouri was indicted on federal child pornography charges, United States Attorney Catherine L. Hanaway announced today.

"Nothing we do is more important than protecting children from these on-line predators. We can only make these cases when we have the commitment of local law enforcement. I am very grateful to the St. Louis County Police Department for their investigation of this case," said Catherine Hanaway.

St. Louis County Police Chief Jerry Lee stated: "We commend the cooperative efforts between the United States Attorney's Office and our Department. We are pleased that a thorough investigation resulted in the indictment of an individual, who at the time, was working as a school district employee in south St. Louis County. Working together, we will not tolerate on-line predators or those who promote child pornography."

Mantle, 44, 2400 block of Sunrise, Barnhart, was indicted earlier today by a federal grand jury on one felony count each of transportation and possession of child pornography. If convicted, the transportation charges carries a **mandatory minimum** of five years in prison and a maximum of 20 years; the possession charge carries a maximum of ten years; along with fines up to \$250,000 and supervised release for life.

The indictment alleges that between December 2005 and February 2006, Mantle sent email messages from Missouri to New Hampshire with attached files which contained child pornography. In count II, the indictment alleges that on February 13, 2006, Mantle was in possession of numerous images containing children under the age of eighteen engaged in sexually explicit conduct.

This case is being brought as part of Project Safe Childhood. In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit

www.projectsafechildhood.gov

Hanaway commended the work on the case by the St. Louis County Police Department, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Assistant United States Attorney Reginald Harris, who is handling the case for the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The charges set forth in an indictment are merely accusations, and each defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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